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AIRGRAM

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TO : Department of State

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FROM : Amembassy ACCRA

DATE: 17 FEB 1963

SUBJECT : Evaluation of NIS Program

REF : CA-6275 of December 7, 1962

The Embassy regrets the delay in replying to CA-6275 asking for comments on certain specific questions about the usefulness of NIS sections. It is hoped, however, that the following comments may still be useful. They are given in the same order as the original questions.

a) In general, the Embassy has made very little use of the NIS sections that have been made available to it, and does not anticipate many situations in which it would have special uses for the NIS.

b) The Embassy does not believe that the NIS would be of great usefulness in the event of a critical situation developing in surrounding areas. In most cases, the current reporting of the posts that are most directly involved gives a better understanding of the problems in such a critical situation. Exceptions are noted in the answer to question "d" below.

c) The Embassy has not made sufficient use of the NIS to criticize the extent of detail in the various sections. In many cases, however, one has the impression that information is provided in greater detail than is really useful. Much of the detailed information tends to become rapidly outdated, despite the fact that the NIS is devoted to basic intelligence. The summary passages do have value, and are useful for general orientation.

d) The sociological, political and economic sections of the NIS generally tend to become outdated more quickly than the others. The most useful or potentially useful of these sections, however, are those which provide the kind of background data that is generally found only in scholarly monographs or reference works. For instance, in West Africa

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Typed by:

POL:WBEEdmondson:bja 2-7-63

Contents and Classification Approved by:

Acting DCM:JBEngle

Clearances:

POL:WBEEdmondson:bja

ESON:JHP

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the sociological sections are potentially of great use if they provide information regarding tribal attitudes and traditions which might have an important bearing upon political developments in a critical situation. The biographic sections have perhaps the greatest potential value, but, unfortunately, they are not usually kept up to date. It would be especially useful if country or area biographic surveys were produced and kept up to date on a loose-leaf basis. Other chapters of the NIS are not usually of direct value to the substantive officers of an Embassy.

e) Most NIS briefs (chapters 1) that Embassy officers have seen appear to have relatively greater value than the other NIS chapters in providing either orientation or a relatively quick overview of the situation in particular countries. The briefs, if periodically updated and perhaps supplemented by NIEs, could provide much of the background information that substantive officers should have available with regard to other countries in the same area. They are also useful for briefing new officers arriving at the post on direct transfer from other areas.

f) The Embassy believes that there is value in a coordinated inter-departmental program designed to provide basic intelligence to various end users, including embassies and overseas posts. The Embassy is not convinced that for its own purposes at least such intelligence needs to be provided either in such detail or as part of such an all-comprehensive program as the NIS. For certain needs it might be better to have special types of "coordinated" intelligence production. For instance, to fill the need for detailed background information on sociological factors that are of importance in the economic and political development of African states, something in the form of a specially prepared (and classified if necessary) version of the Ethnographic Survey of Africa might be more useful than the current sociological sections of the NIS. One has the impression, moreover, that the present NIS program has been overstandardized and that variations in style and format (as well, perhaps, as in content) would increase the applicability and usefulness of the material produced on individual countries.

For the Ambassador:

William B. Edmondson
William B. Edmondson
Second Secretary of Embassy

0861 AON 52
25 NOV 1980

Reviewer *059485*

Date ☐ If contains nothing of CIA interest

Authority: HR 70-2

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Interest that must remain

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